Short sermon Mothering Sunday God our mother
2 Corinthians 1: 3-7 and John 19: 25-27

Opening prayer:
Loving God, as we give thanks for the love of mothers and the love of those who care like mothers, help us to learn more about your mothering love for us. Amen.

When I went into one of our primary schools earlier this week, the music playing as the children came in for their collective worship was a song about all that mothers do for their children and about remembering to say thank you.

In our service today we are saying thank you for all that mothers do. But as we do so, we also remember that it is not only mothers who provide mothering care and mothering love. Today is about celebrating all love of a mothering kind, so we give thanks for all carers, both of children and dependent adults. That’s why I prefer the much older name of Mothering Sunday rather than Mothers’ Day. And as we give thanks for all that is good about a mother’s care, we also remember those who struggle in their role as mother, those who long to be mothers but cannot, and those who have not had happy experiences of being mothered.

Let’s begin by thinking about what mothers typically do. Who can tell me some of the things that their mother does, or has done for them? Or something that, in a mothering role, you have done for others?
Share some of the practical ways in which mothers care, such as feeding, washing, clothing, cleaning up and so on.

But we all know that mothers do far more than just these practical things. They also teach us how to do things, and they teach us how we should behave. Who can tell me something their mother has taught them how to do? Or something that you have taught your children or grandchildren or others to do?
Who can tell me some way their mother has taught them to behave? Or some way you have taught your children or grandchildren to behave?

Who thinks it is easy to be a mother? Put your hand up if you think being a mother is easy.

Being a mother is not easy! It is always hard work, both practically and emotionally. Our reading from John’s gospel shows us that Mary, the mother of Jesus had the hardest task of any mother. She had to watch her son suffer and die. And there are still mothers today who suffer the agony of wanting to help their children and yet being unable to. When we think of what caring like a mother is like, I think it’s right to have a special day to remember all the many ways in which people give, through a mothering love.

But that’s not the main reason why the church remembers Mothering Sunday. The main reason is because the way a perfect mother loves her children is a very good model of the way God loves us all. And just as a perfect mother works and loves and cares for her children so that they grow up to be loving and caring as well, our reading from Paul’s second letter to the church in Corinth tells us that God supports and comforts us so that we learn how to support and comfort others.

One of the ways in which the Christian church has always said thank you for God’s mothering love for us, is to help mothers who are struggling. Three years ago I had just returned from a couple of weeks in South India, as many of you know. One of the places we visited was a home for mentally disabled children, run by the Church of South India. Life is very, very hard for mothers in south India who have a mentally disabled child, because many people think it is the mother's fault, so nobody except the church will help them. In a country with very little medical care, the home we visited taught mums with disabled children how to care for them, and how to play with them. In this country too, the church helps to care for mums who find life difficult. The Mothers' Union runs support groups
for mums and provides chalet holidays for families in need, many of whom have never had a holiday before.

In a few minutes we are going to affirm our faith in our God who cares so much about families and family life. Then we are going to pray. But first, let’s just sit for a moment in silence and remember all those who care for us and all those who we care for. And let’s say thank you to God for all the ways in which these people are special.

Silence

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